

The Ljubljana Initiative for Re-Launching the European Integration

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It is a sign of unconventional times when earnest people wish you a less exciting year 2017 compared to the one that has just, luckily, passed. Starting a new year, a less exciting one then, is an opportunity for reckoning about the past and for charting the plans for the future. For those who care about the project of European integration, these are no easy moments. By looking back we are reminded about the chain of crises that has been strangling the Union. By looking forward we cannot help ourselves but to wring hands at what is yet to follow. It is high time that this self-destructive European (indeed Western) narrative and, unfortunately, praxis were put to a halt. It is high time to present a positive alternative to the present status quo and to the populist decay. It is high time to re-launch the process of European integration.

A week ago the President of the Republic of Slovenia institutionally endorsed the so-called [Ljubljana Initiative](#). A proposal by Slovenian public intellectuals, constitutional lawyers, diplomat, philosopher and poet who call for a new constitutional process in the European Union. Led by Peter Jambrek, former president of the Slovenian Constitutional Court, who has also prepared a tentative [draft of a new Treaty Constitution](#), the signatories of the Ljubljana Initiative hope to stimulate not just an academic, but also public debate on the future of the European Union. Simultaneously the President of the Republic will promote the initiative on the institutional level among his counterparts. Hence, the Ljubljana Initiative has already been welcomed by the newly elected President of Austria. He stressed that the EU is in need of an alternative as the present state of the Union has become unsustainable.

Having had a privilege to co-sign the Ljubljana Initiative, my motives for that have already been presented to the readers of this blog. I have [argued](#) that constitutions are called for in bad times. How much worse can the situation still be?! I have also [stressed](#) that “as a supranational constitutional sceptic I am now convinced that a veritable constitutional engagement is the only way out of this unhappy, indeed deeply concerning situation. With or without Brexit, an intense transnational debate cutting across the Member States and the supranational level needs to be launched to determine whether and to what an extent the peoples of Europe want to engage constitutionally: to do things together for the holistic common good. Only after arriving at this answer, it will be possible to start devising more concrete institutional solutions for the EU’s functioning in the years and decades to come. In the rich repository of the federal idea, there is a plethora of options for also very flexible and differentiated institutional framings, but none of them can function in the absence of the thinnest constitutional desire to do things together, to conceive of oneself as journeying in the same boat, being part of the same polity.”

This is, in a nutshell, why I lay hope in the Ljubljana Initiative. I trust that it can start a fresh, by any means not just apologetic debate, which will be as inclusive as possible and focused on the substance, rather than the form. I can think of no better place than this blog to start this academic (anti-)constitutional engagement. The time is ripe for a snowball effect. It is winter after all. We must not permit that the EU remains permanently stuck in it.

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